

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 COLOMB 03334 030947Z

22

ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5729

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 3334

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MV

SUBJECT: U.S. POLICY TOWARD MALDIVES

REF (A) COLOMBO 3315, (B) COLOMBO 3251, (C) 75 COLOMBO 3716

1. SUMMARY: U.S. INTERESTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES ARE VERY LIMITED BUT ARE INCREASING. THE GOM'S NON-ALIGNED POLICY IS COMPATIBLE WITH U.S. INTERESTS. GOM'S DECISION TO OPEN MISSION TO UN ON PERMANENT BASIS MEANS WE SHOULD EXERT EVERY EFFORT TO INFLUENCE ITS UN VOTE IN WAY FAVORABLE TO U.S. PRESENT U.S. PROGRAMS SHOULD CONTINUE AND EMBASSY RECOMMENDS LOOKING INTO POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING SMALL PL480 PROGRAM AND OTHER ASSISTANCE, PARTICULARLY IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION. END SUMMARY.

2. AMBASSADOR REED'S RECENT TRIP TO MALE PROVIDES BASIS FOR RE-EXAMINATION OF U.S. POLICY TOWARD MALDIVES. VISIT REAFFIRMED THAT OUR RELATIONS ARE FRIENDLY, U.S. INTERESTS CONTINUE TO BE VERY LIMITED BUT ARE INCREASING. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT IF THE GOM FOLLOWS A NON-ALIGNED POLICY THIS WILL BEST SERVE U.S. INTERESTS. THIS SHOULD SUPPORT OUR DESIRE THAT NO HOSTILE POWER GAIN A DOMINANT POSITION IN MALDIVES. THE MALDIVES' RECENT AND SUDDEN INCLUSION AMONG THE RANKS OF THE NON-ALIGNED MAY REINFORCE AN APPARENT MALDIVIAN INCLINATION TO
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 COLOMB 03334 030947Z

REFUSE ANY OFFERS BY FOREIGN COUNTRIES TO TAKE OVER

THE FORMER RAF FACILITIES ON GAN ISLAND FOR THEIR OWN MILITARY USES. GOM'S DECISION TO REOPEN ITS PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UN PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO INFLUENCE MALDIVIAN VOTES ON ISSUES IMPORTANT TO US. THE GOM HAS BEEN HELPFUL PREVIOUSLY ON SOME ISSUES, SUCH AS KOREA, AND COULD CONTINUE TO BE SUPPORTERS OF OUR EFFORTS. THIS IS NOT LIKELY TO BE THE CASE, HOWEVER, WHERE ARAB OR MIDDLE EAST ISSUES ARE CONCERNED. THE MALDIVIANS ARE SUSCEPTIBLE TO ARAB INFLUENCE BECAUSE THE MALDIVIAN SHIPPING LINE DOES MUCH OF ITS BUSINESS BETWEEN ARAB PORTS.

3. AMERICAN BUSINESS INTERESTS HAVE ALSO ENTERED THE MALDIVIAN SCENE WITH TRI-9 CORPORATION'S INTEREST IN AIR MALDIVES (COLOMBO 2037) AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF TWO U.S. FIRMS IN A FISHING AGREEMENT IN THE SOUTHERN ATOLLS. TO THE EXTENT FEASIBLE AND APPROPRIATE, WE BELIEVE THE USG SHOULD CONTINUE TO SEEK WAYS TO EXPAND U.S. COMMERCIAL INTERESTS IN THE MALDIVES.

4. FINALLY, WE BELIEVE THE U.S. SHOULD CONTINUE TO LOOK FOR WAYS TO DEMONSTRATE OUR INTEREST IN THE MALDIVES AND SUPPORT MALDIVIAN EFFORTS TOWARD NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. THIS MIGHT INCLUDE ANY OR ALL OF THE PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS SET FORTH BELOW.

5. TO SUPPORT OUR INTERESTS THE EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING:

(A) IF THE SECURITY SITUATION PERMITS, CONTINUE THE AID-FIANACNED STUDY PROGRAM AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT (AUB) FOR THE THREE STUDENTS WHO ARE STILL ENROLLED THERE.

(B) INVESTIGATE THE POSSIBILITY OF OBTAINING UNDER-GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR MALDIVIAN STUDENTS FROM THE EAST-WEST CENTER IN HAWAII OR AT OTHER LOCATIONS. THESE MIGHT BE GIVEN ONCE GCE "A" LEVEL STUDENTS START COMING OUT OF THE MALE SCHOOL SYSTEM WHICH SHOULD BE WITHIN THE NEXT TWO YEARS.

(C) THE EMBASSY BE AUTHORIZED TO SEND A LETTER TO THE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 COLOMB 03334 030947Z

GOVERNMENT OF MALDIVES OFFERING UP TO \$15,000 IN AID FUNDS TO PURCHASE EQUIPMENT OR SUPPLIES NEEDED TO UPGRADE THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN ACCORDANCE WITH STATE 16877.

(D) PUBLICIZE AND SUPPORT COMMERCIAL AND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR AMERICAN BUSINESS IN MALDIVES.

(E) THE EMBASSY SHOULD BE INFORMED WHETHER THERE IS A POSSIBILITY OF OFFERING RICE OR WHEAT TO THE GOM

UNDER THE PL 480 PROGRAM AND, IF SO, THAT GUIDANCE BE PROVIDED FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION WITH THE MALDIVIAN GOVERNMENT.

(F) CONTINUE TO PLAN FOR A US NAVAL SHIP TO VISIT MALE ONCE A YEAR AS PART OF OUR EFFORT TO DEMONSTRATE US INTEREST IN THE MALDIVES.

(G) THAT RECONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO ESTABLISHING A SEPARATE USIS PROGRAM FOR THE MALDIVES AT A LEVEL OF \$4,000 PER YEAR FOR THE REASONS GIVEN IN REFTEL C.

6. MANY OF THE ABOVE RECOMMENDATIONS REPRESENT MERELY A CONTINUATION OF APPROVAL OF EXISTING PROGRAMS. WE HAVE SUGGESTED LOOKING INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF A MALDIVIAN SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM AT THE EAST-WEST CENTER AS IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT THE AUB PROGRAM MAY NOT BE ABLE TO CONTINUE. THE GOM CONTINUES TO RECOGNIZE ITS DESPERATE NEED FOR TRAINED MANPOWER AND HAS EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN SCHOLARSHIPS WHEREEVER POSSIBLE.

7. WITH THE GOM'S DECISION TO REOPEN ITS PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UN IN NEW YORK AND THE INCREASED US COMMERCIAL INTEREST IN THE MALDIVES, WE BELIEVE FURTHER GESTURES TOWARD THE MALDIVES WILL BE USEFUL. IN ADDITION TO A SEPARATE USIS PROGRAM (5G A ABOVE), WE HAVE INCLUDED THE POSSIBILITY OF COMMENCING A PL480 PROGRAM. NOW THAT THE GOM HAS DECIDED TO SEEK LOANS AND THE US HAS RICE IT WOULD LIKE TO SELL, WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD EXPLORE WHETHER A SMALL PL480 PROGRAM MIGHT NOT SERVE BOTH COUNTRIES' INTERESTS.
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